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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 TRIPOLI 000454

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STATE FOR NEA/MAG, NEA/ELA, NEA/IPA
LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 8/28/2016
TAGS: [OREP](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [LY](#)
SUBJECT: SENATOR SPECTER REVIEWS BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH SENIOR
LIBYAN OFFICIALS

CLASSIFIED BY: Elizabeth Fritschle, Pol/Econ Chief, United
States Liaison Office, DOS.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (SBU) In a series of meetings with senior Libyan officials during his August 21-24 trip to Libya, Senator Arlen Specter, Chairman of the Senate Justice Committee, reviewed the bilateral relationship with senior Libyan officials and inquired about prospects for developing a "Libya model" that could be applied to North Korea or Iran. The Libyans continued to claim, almost reflexively, that they "gave up everything and got nothing in return." The Senator, accompanied by CDA, Legislative Assistant Christopher Bradish and P/E Chief, met with the Libyan Leader Moammar Qadhafi, Libyan Director of Military Intelligence Abdullah Sanussi, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the General Peoples Congress Suleiman Shihumi, Secretary of the General Peoples Committee of Justice Ali Hasnawi, Deputy Secretary of the General Peoples Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation (MFA equivalent) Hafiana, and Secretary of the General Peoples Congress (Prime Minister

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equivalent) al-Baghdadi al-Mahmoudi. The Senator's trip partially overlapped with the visit of Congressman Tom Lantos (septel) and several official meetings were combined.

QADHAFI OPINES LIBYA IS THE ONLY COUNTRY THAT ENJOYS DIRECT
DEMOCRACY

12. (C) Senator Specter and Congressman Lantos were scheduled for separate meetings with Qadhafi August 22, both at a desert encampment in the Sirte governorate. The Specter delegation traveled by U.S. military aircraft to Sirte after all-night

negotiations to get additional flight clearances for the plane to re-enter Libyan airspace and make the Tripoli-Sirte roundtrip segment. The Libyan in charge of the CODEL schedules, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the General People's Congress Suleiman Shihumi, chartered an Air Libya plane from Mitiga International Airport for the Lantos delegation.

13. (S) Qadhafi met with the entire Specter delegation after taking a break for evening prayers at the conclusion of his meeting with Congressman Lantos. Qadhafi, clean-shaven and apparently in good health, exchanged pleasantries to open the session, but characteristically engaged in limited eye contact, focusing instead on the cement-lined pond with fountain located adjacent to his three-sided fabric tent while the Senator spoke. While relying on his personal interpreter to translate, Qadhafi at times interjected comments in English, indicating that he understood almost all of the Senator's remarks.

14. (S) Specter expressed his hope that as democracy spread throughout the world, citing recent elections in Egypt and Afghanistan, that there would be democracy in Libya in the future. Qadhafi, seemingly somewhat taken aback by this comment, launched into an extensive explanation of the Jamahiriya system of government, telling Senator Specter, "we are the sole country that enjoys direct democracy, we hope the U.S. becomes like Libya, it is the ultimate level of democracy where Libyans rule themselves instead of electing officials to represent them." Qadhafi posited that the U.S. system did not reflect the will of the people, citing U.S. popular opinion against the war in Iraq as a reflection of what Libyans view as a disconnect between U.S. citizens and U.S. government policy. He continued, "there is no ill will between the Libyans and the Americans, the government imposed enmity during the time of Reagan...the personality of the President affects foreign policy but is not a reflection of the people's will. Reagan attacked my house; killed my daughter and killed scores of Libyan people, but this is not the will of the American people." Qadhafi told Senator Specter that he hoped basic peoples committees could be established in the U.S., as they had been in Libya. Senator Specter told Qadhafi that in his opinion President Reagan did not have any personal animus, but rather responded directly to the Berlin disco bombing. Qadhafi replied that he was turning a page and moving forward since international terrorism was now a common enemy, along with disease, environmental concerns, and other mutual interests.

QADHAFI -- NEW CHANCERY SHOULD NOT BE USED AS PLATFORM TO ENCOURAGE OPPOSITION

15. (S) Asked about the prospects for obtaining land to build an Embassy chancery, Qadhafi said, apparently half-seriously, "maybe the Libyans heard the Embassy will be a staging ground for opposition activities and counter-Libyan movements," and "maybe the Libyans don't want a big U.S. Embassy." He continued, "people know that chanceries are for cooperation between states and diplomats shouldn't interfere in internal affairs, but people see U.S. embassies all over the world from other angles." Charge challenged that view and highlighted that the Chancery was an important next step in the bilateral relationship. (As reported septel, in other meetings Libyan leaders told Congressman Lantos that they were looking at alternate properties for siting a new Chancery on lots in downtown Tripoli.) When the Senator enlisted Suleiman Shihumi's support for a new chancery so that U.S. citizens could visit Libya, help with job creation and re-energizing the Libyan economy, Shihumi replied, "we have survived for thirty years without U.S. money and had no problems."

LIBYA MODEL - WE GAVE UP EVERYTHING AND GOT NOTHING IN RETURN

16. (S) Senator Specter noted the dramatic shift in U.S.-Libyan relations from the 1980s to now and asked if there was a model that could be applied to the U.S.-Iran relationship. Qadhafi said that Libya urged both North Korea and Iran to give up their WMD programs, but that it had not convinced them because, "if you want Libya to be a model, Libya should get a reward." When

the Senator pressed for more specifics, Qadhafi claimed "the U.S. promised the U.S. and Britain would provide peaceful nuclear energy and Libya would be the Japan of North Africa through technical transfers. But nothing happened. Supposedly the U.S., EU and China were going to build us nuclear power stations, this is the reward we were hoping for."

¶17. (S) In a thirty minute session with al-Baghdadi al-Mahmudi earlier in the day, Specter heard the continuing Libyan refrain that it could not serve as a model for continued engagement with North Korea and Iran to give up WMD programs. Al-Mahmudi claimed that the Iranians scorned the Libyans for "giving up everything and getting nothing in return." He called for more dialogue and cooperation, especially in terms of technology transfer. (Embassy Comment: This Libyan refrain has taken on aspects of a ritualistic incantation over the last two years and is usually a bid to put U.S. interlocutors at a disadvantage at the beginning of a conversation. End Comment.)

QADHAFI SEES WIDE RANGING TERRORIST THREAT

¶18. (S) Asked by Senator Specter about concerns regarding religious extremism, Qadhafi said that he was worried about terrorism worldwide -- from Somali religious courts, to Saudi-funded Wahabi movements spreading radicalism through the Horn of Africa all the way to Bali. When Senator Specter asked how we could deal effectively with terrorists, Qadhafi smiled and said, "On the contrary, you support them; you support the Saudi royal family that funds Wahabi fundamentalists." With regard to Somalia, Qadhafi referred to Libyan citizens who traveled to Saudi Arabia and were radicalized by the Wahabis and provided funding to start the Islamic Union Movement in Mogadishu.

¶19. (S) Qadhafi asked Specter, "why did the U.S. attack Iraq, when the basis of terrorism is the Saudis?" He claimed that Iraq only became a haven for terrorists after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, elaborating, "If Hussein were around then Zarqawi would not be able to operate." Continuing his recurrent theme of the Wahabi threat, Qadhafi argued that the Saudis had made a deal with al-Qaeda operatives "not to direct violence against their own country". He claimed that the Saudis offered support to al-Qaeda for its attacks on the U.S. and Israel if it would refrain from any further attacks in Saudi Arabia. As evidence, Qadhafi cited a recent prisoner escape in Yemen claiming that the Saudis must have arranged for the Yemenis to release the captives in a "staged escape" because the prisoners "could never have dug a tunnel that long". Qadhafi bolstered his claims by saying that the Saudis provided funding for the Bali bombings.

¶10. (S) Calling for the U.S. to stop engaging with the Saudi monarchy and to call for self-determination by the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula, Qadhafi said, "don't go in militarily, but don't support the royal family." When Specter asked, "what if it becomes another Iran?", Qadhafi replied, "anything is better than the current regime." To follow up on this theme, Qadhafi's staff arranged for follow-on meetings for both Senator Specter and Congressman Lantos with Director of Military Intelligence Abdullah Sanussi the next morning.

COUNTER TERRORISM COOPERATION HIGHLIGHTED BY MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

¶11. (S) Libyan Director of Military Intelligence Abdullah Sanussi held a joint meeting with Congressman Lantos and Senator Specter on August 23, calling for increased cooperation in all aspects of our relationship, specifically technology and knowledge transfer. He reiterated Qadhafi's deep concern with Wahabism and the Saudi government's purported link to Al-Qaeda. Sanussi stated that after 9/11, the GOL was perplexed by US behavior as they expected a "judgment day" for Saudi Arabia, home to a majority of the highjackers, not an invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Sanussi also took credit for the GOL putting Osama bin Laden on an Interpol watch list in 1997, showing that they had an inkling of events to come far in

advance of 9/11.

¶12. (S) When Senator Specter pressed Sanussi for solid proof linking Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden to the Saudi government, Sanussi orchestrated a subsequent meeting between Congressman Lantos and Mohamed Ismail, a Libyan national imprisoned in Saudi Arabia for 10 months, charged with a plot to assassinate then Crown Prince Abdullah. The Lantos-Ismail discussions are reported septel.

HASNAWI SAYS COURT CASES TO BE RESOLVED BY END OF YEAR

¶13. (C) Secretary Ali Hasnawi of the General Peoples Committee for Justice told Senator Specter that Libya hoped to resolve all outstanding court cases by the end of the year. He said that the lawyers were finalizing negotiations and he was optimistic about positive outcomes. Regarding Lockerbie and other cases, Hasnawi said, "if the courts are involved, we will abide by the courts' ruling." To the follow-up question, "how many will go to court and how many will settle," Hasnawi said that he hoped all the cases would be settled out of court. Regarding the Bulgarian medics case, Hasnawi highlighted the humanitarian needs of the HIV-infected Libyans as well as the judicial procedures. He speculated that it would take two or three months for a verdict to be reached in the current trial, depending on the defense requests to present additional witnesses or evidence. (Embassy Comment: That timetable seems to have accelerated with the court's August 29 hearing, since subsequent sessions are now scheduled at only one-week intervals, for September 5 and 12.) Hasnawi assured Specter that the high-profile case was receiving the greatest attention by his legal experts and the Libyan leadership. Charge noted our deep concern for the Benghazi children, that the USG offered medical assistance, and was involved in ongoing humanitarian efforts, including the Benghazi International Support Fund.

¶14. (C) Asked for his opinion on the effectiveness of sanctions regimes, Hasnawi said that Libya suffered from isolation as communications with the outside world were reduced and air traffic was cut off. He noted the financial impact of sanctions, especially through lost economic opportunities. In terms of industrial capacity, he emphasized that the energy industry was not able to upgrade any of its facilities and major infrastructure investments were needed at this time. Specter questioned what factors made Libya willing to reconsider its positions and renounce its WMD program. Hasnawi, as did Libyan officials in other meetings, said it was Libya's aspiration to give its people a better way of life, a more secure future living in peace with other countries, that motivated the policy shift. Secretary of International Cooperation of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation Mohammed Siala, on the margins of another meeting, told Specter that Libya paid compensation for the Lockerbie bombing "as the price of ending UN sanctions and being able to re-engage with the rest of the world because the settlement cost as less than the revenue losses under sanctions."

SHIHUMI CALLS FOR EXPANDING COMMON INTERESTS - BUT NO MEDDLING

¶15. (C) Secretary of the Foreign Relations Committee of the General Peoples Congress Suleiman Shihumi was the Libyan's official host for the Specter delegation. Shihumi hosted a welcoming dinner at a restaurant next to the historic Marcus Aurelius Arch in the old city. In his introductory meeting with the Senator, Shihumi emphasized that the Jamahiriya was a unique system of government suitable for the Libyan people; "it is not an easy system, but we are evolving and people participate at all levels." Anticipating Qadhafi's later comments about terrorism, Shihumi called for an international conference to identify the root causes and clarify the difference between terrorism and the right of people to defend themselves. He said that Libya was interested in developing broad ties with the U.S. based on common interests, but without any meddling in internal affairs.

LIBYANS DO NOT SEE THE U.S. AS AN UNBIASED PLAYER IN MIDDLE EAST

¶16. (C) Shihumi, in response to the Senator's presentations on U.S. policies and priorities in the region, said that "the scales the U.S. uses in the Middle East are not balanced," continuing, "the U.S. ignored the recent killings at Qana while complaining about other strikes in Israel." Shihumi gave the Libyan perspective that it would take dramatic steps to resolve the current Lebanese-Israeli conflict; "it has given radicals every incentive to act and will only create more Usama Bin Ladens." He claimed that Israel was able to act with impunity since "it has the support and political cover of the U.S. -- it is not looking for compromise solutions." Shihumi claimed that "all Muslims and Arabs" feel the same way. Senator Specter reviewed the many successful U.S. efforts in the interests of peace in the region and said that the U.S. was prepared to talk and listen to concerns. While the U.S. was involved in a wide range of initiatives and peace negotiations, Specter also called for Qadhafi and others to play a constructive role.

ADVOCACY FOR BOEING AIRCRAFT IN EVERY MEETING

¶17. (SBU) Senator Specter advocated on behalf of Boeing in each of his sessions, stressing the firm's competitive advantages. Most Libyan officials welcomed the U.S. interest in commercial aircraft sales, but did not offer any substantive response. (Embassy Comment: Mohammed Siala had previously told Embassy that he thought Libya will most likely purchase equipment from both Boeing and Airbus. End Comment.)

¶18. (SBU) Congressman Lantos and Senator Specter did not clear this cable before departing Tripoli.
BERRY